

## Following are some water quality issues common to many public water supplies:

**Yellow/Brown/Dirty Discoloration** – Brown or dirty colored water occurs when harmless silt particles, which typically settle along the bottom of water mains, are stirred up by high flows of water. This can occur when a fire hydrant is used, when a main breaks or when the system is flushed annually. Run the cold water tap for 3-5 minutes to determine if the water in the distribution main is cleared up. If not, avoid using the water for a few hours (to give crews a chance to finish their work) and try it again. If the water is still discolored, contact the Water Utility at 769-2235.

**White Discoloration** – Cloudy or milky white water is usually caused by an abundance of small air bubbles in the water. The bubbles are harmless and enter the water when air is drawn into the transmission system that carries water through the distribution system. This is very common in the winter with colder water. A freshly filled glass of cold water should clear after a few minutes. When the water clears, people usually report a thin film on the top, an odor and a metallic taste. The thin film is the micro-particles in the water. The odor is the gases stripped from the water. The metallic taste is thought to be the bubbles' effect in your mouth.

**Sand and Grit** – Sandy particles and grit occur in the home plumbing system as a result of rust particles from steel pipe and mineral scale sloughing off the pipe wall. A common knife blade will crush rust or mineral scale, while true sand will resist crushing. This grit may cause premature failure of faucets. It will also affect the operation of faucet aerators. Check your washing machine—if it is filling too slowly, replace the screen filters where the hot and cold water hoses enter the back of the machine.

**Pink Stains** – Bright pink stains on fixtures, drainboard surfaces and pet dishes are caused by the interaction of oxygen in the air with dissolved rust, resulting in an iron hydroxide precipitate on the surfaces. Run the cold water for 15-60 seconds or until the water temperature changes. Keep the surfaces dry to help reduce this problem. Pale pink or black-gray stains around bathtubs or showers may also be a form of mildew.

**Chlorine Taste/Odor** – The City adds chlorine to its water supply to kill bacteria and other microbes. Some chlorine taste/odor may be detected by sensitive individuals at different times of the year. Residual levels of chlorine in the late spring and summer may appear to be higher due to the combination of chlorine with naturally occurring plant materials. These levels will appear to be lower and chlorine odor and taste should be less in the fall. Drinking water may be more appealing if it is left in the refrigerator overnight to minimize the chlorine taste and odor.

**Earthy/Musty Odor** – Earthy or musty tastes/odors occur in Lake Michigan water, most often in the late summer or early fall when algae growth increases because of warmer weather and sunlight. The odor is worse in stagnant water areas and more noticeable when the water temperature rises.

**Lead** – Drinking water is not a major source of lead exposure. Lead in drinking water comes from pre-1986 copper pipe and from brass faucets. Some lead may dissolve into the water when it sits in tap for 15-60 seconds or until the water temperature changes to eliminate any lead dissolved in silt.